

Handling Anger...

by Matthew McGahran, ACSW, Counselor

It may depend on your *Sex*

Men and woman are, obviously, different. We drive differently, talk differently, walk, run, do the laundry and handle our emotions in different ways.

Women are very good at quite experienced with emotions. Women feel a range of emotions from sadness to elation and 10,000 emotions in between. Men are not so capable. We are happy or we are angry. Most of the time we go along, pretty happy, until something happens, and we get mad. The situation may not require anger, but since we're not happy, what else can we be?

This black and white thinking can lead to some pretty common misunderstandings. A wife may make

been developed so humans could react quickly to situations where there is actual danger. We would need to fight the danger or run away from it. This response seems to be more developed in men than in women, possibly due to the historic roles of men to face danger and keep the families (woman and children) safe.

The emotional response that motivates people to run away from or face danger is anger.

So, does the husband actually think he is in danger by his wife making a suggestion to him? Not necessarily, but he may feel defensive.

This overdeveloped fight or flight response and the underdeveloped emotional repertoire give men a limited choice of reactions in any given situation. Often men will feel the physical symptoms of their angry response and then begin to think they are angrier than they actually are. When this happens they often do become angrier.

The initial response is where the cycle begins. Knowing that an unwanted suggestion is not making him happy, a man will make himself angry. Normally this is not a welcomed emotion but, as was stated before, his choices are limited. Being angry creates physiological changes, like increased adrenaline, rapid breathing, etc., that are needed to fight or run away. Many times men recognize these emotional and physical responses as dangerous in themselves, so they "shut-down". The "shut-down" is necessary when a



man feels that he is becoming emotionally and physically uncontrollable. The anger will eventually dissipate and a man can go about his business, until the next time. Men with anger problems have difficulty understanding that a suggestion is not a threat and that the angry reaction is probably not the most effective course of action. These men also need to develop a more complex emotional repertoire, so they can pull from a wide range of emotions and experience a different type of interaction.



a suggestion to her husband to do a certain thing a certain way. The husband was perfectly happy doing the thing his way, but now, after hearing the suggestion, he's not happy. What is he then? Angry.

That was fast. One second he's happy and the next he's angry. How could that happen so quickly? I'm glad you asked.

Operating in everyone's brain is a "fight or flight" response. This response has

The Fleet and Family Support Center is offering Anger Management for four consecutive Tuesdays in September 2003.

Call Matt McGahran at the FFSC, DSN 627-7818 or Comm. 0771-709-818, to sign up.

